

September 30, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: Request for Information - Interim Charges 2.1

Texas House Human Services Committee:

Saint Francis Community Services in Texas, Inc. (Saint Francis) is the community-based care provider in Region 01 serving 41 counties and 1,100 children and their families in the foster care system. Our services include recruiting targeted capacity and providers, community development, case management, and supporting over 160 partner agencies, while ensuring safety, well-being, and permanency for our communities' children.

Saint Francis began the intake and transfer process of the DFPS legacy children into the Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) system in collaboration with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on January 6, 2020. Although this year has proven challenging due to COVID-19 and loss of capacity across the state, Saint Francis has made progress in our work with children. During the 86th Legislative Session, the Legislature made child welfare a priority, which was clear on the expansion of community-based care in various areas across the state.

Saint Francis would like to highlight our work thus far:

- **Safety of Children** – Saint Francis maintained 100% compliance ensuring children are safe.
- **Least Restrictive** – Saint Francis increased the DFPS legacy historical average from 69.1% to 76.5%, which means more children are being placed in home like settings.
- **Sibling Placements** – Saint Francis increased the DFPS legacy historical average from 61.2% to 65.1%, meaning more children are being placed with their siblings.
- **Placement Stability** – Saint Francis has reduced the number of moves children are making from the DFPS legacy system from 1.48 to 1.18, which ensures our children are staying in stable environments.

Saint Francis strongly advocates in the continuance of community-based care implementation across Texas and would like to see funding approved for Stage II services in Region 01 along with other SSCC areas. We feel Stage II is vital to improving the lives of children and families, as it will give Saint Francis the opportunity to work directly with biological and kinship families, court systems, attorneys, CASA, and our communities to ensure children are successfully and safely reunified with their biological parents.

Interim Charge 2.1:

Saint Francis supports working in close collaboration with the Department of Family and Protective Services to see optional portions of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) integrated into the current community-based care model. In the past year, Saint Francis has been part of a workgroup with DFPS to identify and offer guidance on the different approaches in how FFPSA can be integrated into the current community-based care continuum of service. Saint Francis would support FFPSA being a function in the current community-based care staged implementation and structure. In the current model, Stage I

focuses on network and resource development, while in Stage II the emphasis is on case management and stabilization. Saint Francis would recommend a thorough assessment in collaboration with DFPS to look at a funding model and roll-out plan for this to move to community-based providers.

FFPSA being a part of the staged function will allow community-based care organizations who are currently in various stages to focus on the following areas:

- Develop practices using evidence-based techniques to best support children and families;
- Build the needed infrastructure of community services to support families and create additional opportunities for families to be successful;
- Create additional support and ownership in the various communities and create a local sense of ownership; and
- Complete community and regional assessments to determine full case management service array and seek strategies to address needs.
- Enhance data collection regarding the impact of prevention (FFPSA) services upon out of home placements.

Saint Francis has led the way in various states with FFPSA roll-out, and through our evidence-based practice model feel like we can bring support to children and families in Region 01. Again, Saint Francis supports the transition of FFPSA and preservation services to private providers in the community-based care model.

As we have become an integral part of the communities we serve, we would love to meet with you during this interim and further discuss the work we do. Our hope is that in the future we can invite you to tour our facilities and meet with our local partners to see the important work we are doing to keep our communities' children safe.

Thank you for your service. Please know that Saint Francis is a resource to you all now and in the future, and please to do not hesitate to call on me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Cristian Garcia, MS, LCPAA
Regional Vice President

